

Catholic Action

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REVEREND AMLETO CICOGNANI

The address of the apostolic Delegate delivered at the Catholic Charities Convention, New York City, October, 1933.

IT is fitting that I should speak during this National Conference of Catholic Charities of one of the most notable works of the Pontificate of our Holy Father Pope Pius XI—Catholic Action. As the representative of His Holiness, I welcome the opportunity of doing so in the Archdiocese of New York, in the presence of His Eminence, its beloved Cardinal, the Apostle of Charity.

THE HOLY FATHER

The Holy Father, charged with the government of the Universal Church, realizing the prevalence of evils that threatened the destruction of human society, conscious of the needs of the whole human family, issued as early as 1932 a call to Catholics throughout the world to enlist in the apostolate of Catholic Action. And by Catholic Action the Holy Father did not mean an organization or a religious activity merely requiring conformity to the principles of the Catholic religion, but one transcending that conformity and promoting our Holy Faith in such a manner as to constitute a true apostolate.

NOT A NEW CALL

This was in reality not a new call. It was rather the call of the Vicar of Christ, reëchoing throughout the Christian centuries, urging all to obey the precept of old: "God gave to every one of them a commandment concerning his neighbor" (Eccl. xvii, 12). This call reminded the Christian world of the fulfilment of its duties in a holy militia to which all Catholics belong by virtue of their membership in an ecclesiastical society—the Church—which membership imposes upon the individual definite obligations to society.

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

He who strives to be good individually does well. But this is not sufficient. He cannot ignore the Divine command concerning his neighbor, but must keep ever in mind the new law of Christ: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xix, 19). He must enter, therefore, into the soul of the social body. This has been done from the dawn of the Christian ages by the disciples, the deacons, and the holy women, who, as St. Paul says, "labored with me in the Gospel" (Philipp. iv, 3). This labor has varied with the changing conditions of the centuries, fitting itself to the needs of each age.

THE VIGILANT SENTINEL

In our day the Holy Father, the vigilant sentinel of the world, viewing from his sacred watch-tower the conditions of all peoples, and knowing their spiritual needs as no one else knows them, has deemed it necessary to unite through Catholic Action the activities of the faithful and to bring them into closer association with the labors of the hierarchy. This does not mean merely a grouping of organizations that promote, for example, particular charitable or beneficent works. For these may be only auxiliary labors, and only in a broad sense are they to be considered as Catholic Action, unless they possess another characteristic. It does mean, however, associations of the laity organized by a special mandate of ecclesiastical authority, dependent directly upon that authority and working under a code of regulations sanctioned by it. It may be so said that the first necessary condition for Catholic Action is a commission from the hierarchy.

CATHOLIC ACTION DEFINED

Pope Pius XI has in a few words defined Catholic Action with marvelous clearness: "It is a participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy of the Church." This is a world-embracing program, excluding nothing that pertains to the Divine mission of the Church of God. Catholic Action, therefore, is a participation in that mission received from the hands of the Lord Christ Himself, which is the sanctification and salvation of the souls of men. That mission was given by our Blessed Lord to His Vicar, St. Peter, and his successors, the Bishops of the Church.

WHAT CATHOLIC ACTION IS NOT

In order to make clear what Catholic Action is, it may be well to explain what it is not. Catholic Action is not a mere striving for individual perfection. It is not simply this or that particular activity conforming to the principles of our Holy Faith and carried out by this or that group or association of Catholics. It is not the works of a Catholic lay organization or religious association performed in compliance with its own particular constitution. Catholic activity that is not *de facto* and officially made participant in the mission of the Bishop is not Catholic Action. Hence, Catholic lay groups or religious associations that have not a commission from the hierarchy and are not made by the Bishop of the diocese to share in some measure his apostolate are not Catholic Action, even though they labor under its banner. Since a commission must be given it can come only from him who holds it—either the Vicar of Christ or the Bishop of the diocese.

POLITICAL ACTION EXCLUDED

Political activities, as such, form no part of Catholic Action because the Church, though obliged to keep ever before her children the principles of social justice and to enter any field where men's souls are being endangered, makes it clear that affairs strictly political are not her concern. Her competency is above and beyond all this. Her ends are not political. They are of a much higher order. While parties are formed and separated by politics, the Church strives to unite all and wishes to lead all in the way of spiritual safety to their eternal destiny.

WHAT CATHOLIC ACTION IS

We ask, then! What is Catholic Action? It is an apostolate. But there are many apostolates, such as that of the Word of God, of good example, of charity as conceived by Ozanam, of suffering, or the press. These particular apostolates must not be identified with that of Catholic Action, which is all-embracing and is intended to bring souls, families and nations into the Kingdom of God.

It is meant to help those who have been divinely constituted in the apostolate of the hierarchy. And since the task

of sanctifying, teaching and ruling the faithful was confided by the Divine Founder of the Church to the Pope and to the Bishops ("Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"), Catholic Action is a collaboration with the Pope and with the Bishops. It is therefore necessary that it be dependent upon the Pope and the Bishops, that it be directed by them, and that it move within the limits assigned and approved by the teaching Church.

HIERARCHY CANNOT CEDE ITS POWERS

We cannot lay too strong emphasis on the fact that Catholic Action is simply a help to the hierarchy. Divinely constituted, the hierarchy cannot cede to others its powers and apostolic functions; but it can share with the faithful its hierarchical mission. It can profitably ask the collaboration of the laity, as has been done from the time of the Apostles to our own day. It can send forth the faithful of the Church as representatives, official delegates to perform the good works entrusted to them.

LAITY TO BE ORGANIZED

Catholic Action is a participation in a Hierarchy of Order, made up of Bishops and priests, and with a Hierarchy of Jurisdiction, comprising Pope and Bishops. The powers of Order begin with sacred ordination itself, while the powers of Jurisdiction are conferred by a canonical mandate.

The Church has instituted other offices, among which is the office of the parish priest; and therefore to him also belong the duty and the right to exercise the works of the ministry and of the apostolate. Catholic Action must depend upon the parish priest, according to the directions given by the Pope and the Bishops. As the representative of his Bishop, he is the bridge between the hierarchy and the associations of Catholic Action. Submission to the leaders of Catholic Action chosen by the Church is necessary. Without it there can be neither order nor discipline. A lack of submission would make Catholic Action impossible. It would mean an army disorganized. In the words of St. Ignatius the Martyr, "There is nothing without the Bishop."

This dependence, then, calls for an organization of those who are to labor in the vineyard of Christ, that is, in the

Church of God. The laity are to be so organized through Catholic Action as to have an orderly and ordered participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. And, thus organized, they must profess and defend Catholic principles. They must be eager to act under the direction of the Pope and the Bishops and zealous in carrying out the orders received from them. Under this safe guidance their words and actions will manifest the courage and the prudence of the Church.

The united lay organization, Catholic Action, is, indeed, a dependent work; but, within the limits necessary to any formal participation in the Church's religious-social mission, it is really an organization of the laity themselves; they are its members; they are its administrators; they carry on its work.

A HOLY OBJECTIVE

The object of Catholic Action is a holy one; its scope is the Kingdom of God. Through it one can the better sanctify not only himself but others. We see in the servant of God, Frederick Ozanam, an example of this sanctification. It helps to give a moral formation, developing character in the light of Christian principles. It calls for coöperation in order to bring about the acceptance of Christian thought and ideals and to supernaturalize secular life. It demands the coöperation of many forces to christianize the family, the school, the customs and manners of the people, and all agencies forming public opinion—in a word, the entire social body.

A LIVING ORGANISM

Catholic Action is a law of unity. It is a law of the Christian life, for Catholicism is a living organism rather than a regimented organization. Catholic Action calls for a solidarity of interests converging toward the Kingdom of God. We must therefore expect movement, progress and adaptability to changing conditions in Catholic Action, without, however, changing one iota of the truths and principles that are immutable in our holy religion.

GOSPEL THE SUPREME CODE

Catholic Action can illuminate society with the light that comes from the living Gospel, and can make the Gospel the

supreme code of private and public action, bringing home to the Christian the realization that he cannot be a Christian for himself alone, but that, like a soldier who has given himself to the service of his country, he has pledged himself to a Christian society to labor for its general welfare. Catholic Action will make him conscious of his obligation to exercise, both privately and publicly, whatever influence he may possess for the good of others; it will make him realize also that he has at his command not only means of the natural order, but also gifts of the order of grace.

RECONSTRUCT CHRISTIAN CITY AND NATION

Our Holy Father Pope Pius XI wished to show to the world by the organized forces of Catholic Action the power of those gifts of grace for the spiritual good of society throughout all the nations.

It is within the scope of Catholic Action to reconstruct the Christian city and the Christian nation, which modern pagan forces have sought to destroy. This means in a certain sense a holy battle for the defense of society, both domestic and religious, in its various activities of charity and religion, in its office of teaching and in its work of sanctifying souls.

AMERICA'S LUMINOUS EXAMPLE

America in the multiplicity of its activities has given, and is giving, continuous, magnificent and luminous examples of Catholic Action. Its organizations, well established in parish life, dependent upon the parish priest and the Bishop, are widely known. They are the life of the parishes and of the diocese, manifesting a coöperation that is truly exemplary. They are admired by other nations.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic charities, as organized in many dioceses, are not simple pious associations, nor are they confined even to the limits of the beneficent Conferences of St. Vincent, which according to the strict idea of Ozanam are merely auxiliaries of Catholic Action. Catholic charities in America are much broader in their scope, for they promote and direct the activities of thousands of the laity—men, women, youths, children—organized by ecclesiastical authority, ready to co-

operate in every way for the extension of the Kingdom of God in the home, in the city and in the nation. Catholic charities have a truly diocesan character, under the direction of the Ordinary, comprising pious, beneficent, social and cultural works. They constitute a true division of Catholic Action.

ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK

The Archdiocese of New York, under the zealous direction and fatherly care of His Eminence, Cardinal Hayes, has set a glorious example in the organization of its charities. The interest, enthusiasm and love for souls manifested during these days of the National Conference show forth the results of Catholic Action and give promise of even greater victories.

FORCES OF EVIL

Wherever the Church is developing her holy mission she has grave needs. And everywhere the forces of evil are working ceaselessly to restrict her in the fulfilment of her divine mission of saving souls. An example in our day is the moving picture, with its incalculable influence for evil. What a massacre of the innocence of youth is taking place hour by hour! How shall the crimes that have their direct source in immoral motion pictures be measured? Catholics are called by God, the Pope, the Bishops and the priests to a united and vigorous campaign for the purification of the cinema, which has become a deadly menace to morals. And this is but one of many evil forces working against the Lord and against His Christ—forces with which Catholic Action must wage relentless warfare.

A HOLY CRUSADE

Catholics of America must show their zeal for every good work, for every holy crusade, sanctifying others by their example. In his individual life, and in the life of the family, by his observance of the sanctity of the marriage state, by his zeal for the education of youth and by his generous co-operation in every movement to which he is called by his spiritual leaders, the true Catholic will respond to the invitation of Pope Pius XI and thus render an inestimable contribution to the Church and to the nation. He will answer wholeheartedly the call of Catholic Action!

The Kingdom of God

REVEREND PAUL L. BLAKELY, S.J.

A Sermon preached by the Associate Editor of AMERICA at the Red Mass celebrated for the Guild of Catholic Lawyers in St. Andrew's Church, New York, September 28, 1933.

THERE are two types of sermon which we can hear with profit. The first is the finished oration which in beautiful language sweeps logically and majestically to its magnificent peroration. We listen, and at the end we exclaim, "That was superb! I'm proud of my religion. Thank God, I am a Catholic." The other sermon may be trite in topic, weak in presentation, fumbling in its diction, but there is something in it which moves us to say, after the preacher has stumbled out of the pulpit, "Well, I had better examine my conscience," and then, "O, God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Unable to preach the first sermon, with the help of God I propose to essay the second. If, after examining your consciences, you honestly conclude that all is substantially well, thank God for it. But if all is not well, then let me beg of you for the honor of your profession and for the eternal welfare of your immortal souls, to retrace your steps, and seek and find the paths of righteousness and justice.

THE OLD-TIME LAWYER

Yours is a profession with a long and honorable history. To confine ourselves to this country, let us remember that lawyers were responsible, very largely, for the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. They are also responsible, largely, for the steel trust, the banking affiliates, the public utilities with their elusive holding companies, and for the wiles and sinuosities of modern business which make both venerable documents read like travesties.

What has happened to the profession in the last one hundred years? Evidently, there is a difference between the eighteenth-century lawyer and his learned brother in the nineteenth and twentieth. The differences are so striking

that they suggest, at times, a distinctly different breed. It has been said, and with truth, that to indict a whole profession is as foolish as to indict a whole people. But no one wishes to indict the profession. Certainly I do not. The indictment, by reason of the many exceptions, would be grossly inaccurate. But it is quite pertinent to the case in hand to indict the influences which gradually but, in my judgment, surely, are tending to lead the whole profession astray.

I have read somewhere that the eighteenth-century colonies wore out more Blackstones than did the parent country. In those days the leaders of the American scene, particularly the lawyers, were political-minded, and thought the study of liberty and government well worth their attention. From St. Thomas and from St. Robert Bellarmine they derived a knowledge of political philosophy, as that philosophy was filtered through the controversies of the English Whigs, and it was their aim to apply what they learned to the conditions in which they found themselves. No great industrial disputes disturbed the colonies, for the age of machinery was far in the future. True, there was traffic between the colonies, and an overseas commerce, but the vast majority of the people were devoted to agricultural pursuits.

Living in this environment, the lawyer could and did devote much time to the study of the fundamental principles of government and of human liberty, and impart to his fellow citizens what he learned, in correspondence by letter, in addresses in the colonial assemblies, and in arguments presented to the courts. The efforts of the profession resulted in the creation and diffusion of a highly intelligent, well-informed public opinion. The Declaration was not an enumeration of novelties but, as Jefferson has written, a statement of principles and conclusions which the people had been discussing for years. A people educated in this school, staffed by lawyers, were well fitted to conceive the Constitution, and to make it in fact an instrument for the establishment of justice and the promotion of the general welfare.

HIS MODERN BROTHER

Less fortunate than his eighteenth-century ancestor, the lawyer of today lives in a laissez faire industrial age, and is exposed to the contagion of its debased principles and prac-

tices. He discusses steel and the restraints of Congress on business, instead of government and the restraints of business upon human liberty. Rarely does he appear in court to set a whole nation in flames, as that lean, lank, uncouth lawyer, Patrick Henry did, in his plea for religious liberty in Virginia. He pleads, rather, for the woes of the corporation, and in its behalf begs the court to extend to prostrate plutocracy the benefits of that Amendment to the Constitution which was drawn up to protect the newly liberated African slave. No longer, I fear, is he recognized by the people as the tireless defender of the common good, but, rather, as the unflinching advocate of the right of the utility company to pile up reserves and increase its dividends, by raising its rates in a time of general economic distress. Propriety, not the welfare of the people, is his retainer.

IS THE INDICTMENT TRUE?

My learned brothers, if these are the opinions of the laity, let them not for that reason be scorned. To see ourselves as others see us is a boon. Nor let us forget that they are shared by clear-sighted members of the profession. Speaking at the commencement of the Albany Law School last June, the Hon. Thomas F. Conway, at one time lieutenant-governor of this State, drew up on indictment which, if it cannot be fully sustained in all its parts, at least challenges our serious attention. In Mr. Conway's opinion, corporations and networks of subsidiaries, affiliates, and holding companies, are largely responsible for the economic plight in which we find ourselves. Asking how these corporations have been able to keep within the law, while preying on the public, Mr. Conway answered by saying that no important step could have been taken in the creation, or in the operation, of this jungle of corporate entities "without the aid and advice of some outstanding member or members of the bar." While not all lawyers had been anxious to lend their aid to the promotion of these nefarious, but usually legal, schemes, some members of the bar "were always ready to give their services to the very forces that have caused most of our troubles."

The indictment is grave, and in my judgment, the bar as a profession must meet it. It will never be met seriously, so long as the bar, or a considerable portion of it, refuses

to recognize higher standards of morality than those which are embodied in the statute law. An act can be harmful to individuals, and can inflict grave injury on the community, and yet remain in the catalogue of acts not forbidden by the civil or criminal law. Every lawyer meets "border-line cases" in his practice, but Mr. Conway's condemnation does not refer to these. He was speaking of cases which every man of common sense must recognize as within the strict letter of the law, and, at the same time, harmful to the common good. My brothers, are we to stand tamely by until an ancient and honorable profession has become the right arm of corrupt politicians and still more corrupt corporations?

I do not present these statements to you as conclusive evidence. I merely submit them to your honest judgment. But you will allow me to offer with them the supreme law on which your judgment must be based.

ONE STANDARD ONLY

In the tenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, we read that a certain lawyer came to Our Lord, "tempting Him and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer pondered for a moment, possibly, and searching his memory, answered with the text from Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself." Jesus said to him, "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live," and thereupon He told the lawyer the beautiful story of the Good Samaritan.

I conclude, then, that the supreme law of life is the law which bids us to love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves. It has been the folly of this age to assert that while love of God and of our neighbor may be desirable in our lives as private individuals, it need have no place of importance in education, in commerce and finance, in government, or in the professions. But that divorce is unwarranted. If we try to be Christians in our private lives, but abstract from the fundamental law of Christianity in our professional capacities, we shall end as pagans in both. Christianity has no meaning unless it teaches us that there

is no human activity whatever from which Almighty God and the greatest of laws promulgated by His Divine Son, the law of love, can safely be excluded. Therefore we cannot be Christians at home and Christians at the altar, but free to shed our Christianity as we enter our offices.

THE LAW OF LOVE

My brothers of the Guild, bear with me if I suggest that we may profitably examine our consciences on the law of love as it affects our younger brothers in the profession. When the young priest comes to us with the oils of his anointing still wet upon his consecrated hands, it is the happiness of all his older brethren who long have ministered at the altar, to receive him as an object of their especial solicitude. It is their task and their blessed privilege to help and encourage him by word and by example, and they would consider themselves recreant to duty if aught they said or did should add to the responsibilities which rest upon his untried shoulders. I think I have noted a similar spirit of kindness and helpfulness in the attitude of the older physicians to their younger brethren. I ask myself if members of the legal profession merit, universally, the same praise. When the young lawyer who has just passed his bar examinations comes, timid and bewildered, to your office, what reception to you give him? If he writes you, asking your help, do you show him the elementary courtesy of answering his letter? Do you look upon him as a brother in an ancient and honorable profession, equally with yourself a sworn officer of the law, or do you treat him as an intruder, as a possible business competitor?

YOU ARE YOUR BROTHER'S KEEPER

If, at last, you assign him a desk and a chair in your office, do you make it your first duty to show him good example, or do you throw upon his shoulders work which you do not care to undertake yourself? Work, perhaps, which you would be ashamed to undertake? Work, possibly, which if brought to light, would result in your disbarment? Do you pay him a living wage, or do you take advantage of his need, thus rendering yourself liable to the guilt of a sin that cries out to Heaven for vengeance?

If you do not hold up to him in your conduct the highest

ideals of the bar, infused with the spirit of Christianity, can it be said of you, whatever your protestations, that you love your neighbor, or that you love God? If thus you violate the first great commandment of the law of God, you will most assuredly fail in the supremely important work of life, in comparison with which none other is truly important, that of saving your immortal soul.

My brethren, the day will come, and it may be close at hand, when you and I shall be summoned by God's great apparitor, Death, to stand before the judgment seat. Of no avail will it be to us to plead our wealth, our learning, the eminence which we reached in the profession, the praise as welcome to our willing ears as the dews of heaven to the thirsty earth, the eulogies that men wrote, more in kindness than in truth, after our departure from this stage of life. The indictment to which we shall then plead will be based on the fundamental law of the soul's life, the love of God above all, and of our neighbor as ourselves. Well will it be for us if in every action of our professional as well as of our private lives, we have earnestly striven to conform to the law of love.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What I have said may suffice to express my deep conviction that one of the most pressing duties devolving upon every member of this Guild is that of helping the younger brethren in the profession. But bear with me a little longer, I beg, while I close with a thought borrowed from the great Catholic dramatist of Spain, G. Martinez Sierra, in his play, "The Kingdom of God." The connection is not forced, for the whole purpose of that moving drama is to show that the woes of the world are not cured by hatred, but only by that love which builds up on earth the Kingdom of God, and prepares us for citizenship in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Perhaps you recall the conclusion of the third part which shows Sister Gracia, now an old lady, in charge of a home for orphaned boys and girls. Because the supper is very poor, the boys flame out in revolt, and their leader, mouth-ing phrases of revolution which he has somehow picked up, proposes to wreck the refectory, and then to go out and take by force what he and his companions desire. At this point, Sister Gracia comes upon the scene, and by the exercise of

innate authority, secures comparative quiet. The world is unjust, the world is bad, the rebels assert, and therefore it is right to cure it by violence. "Ah, no, no," says Sister Gracia, "all that can be done for this wicked world is to help to make it good . . . not by hating, but through love." The injustice in the world, she tells them, does not come from God, but from unjust men who hate Him and His children, and flout His law. There is misery and wretchedness among men; therefore, let us strive not to add to it, but to lessen it. And as these half-grown boys listen, won by the beauty and the power of her words, she bids them swear with her that they will do all they can to make the world a better place to live in. "Jesus, Son of God, Christ, Son of man, by the Divine Blood Thou didst shed for us we swear to spend our own when we are men . . . that children may not be forsaken any more . . . that no more mothers may be wronged and go hungry and be ashamed to hold their children in their arms. My sons, my sons, promise me that when you are men you'll try to bring these things to pass . . . that you'll help to build on earth the Kingdom of God."

No higher ideal can be presented to us. Let us, in our turn, swear to build up the Kingdom of God upon earth through that love for God and man which wins for us eternal life.

The Yearly "Run" on the Church's Treasury

REVEREND FRANCIS P. LeBUFFE, S.J.

Reprinted from AMERICA (New York), November 5, 1932.

EVERY good Catholic thinks of the Holy Souls frequently but it takes November to snap us all into unusual prayer and activity in behalf of those "who have preceded us in the sign of Faith." And so it is that each November sees a heavy "run" on the Church's treasury.

It is the one treasury, the one bank, that can stand any "run" and never become bankrupt or be in the remotest

danger of bankruptcy. That is why the Holy Father never has to call for an audit of this treasury, never has to consult the "assets" column to find out whether it be safe to grant new indulgences.

Just why it is inexhaustible is clear once we understand what are the assets of "this treasury of good works," and whence comes its revenues.

First, what are the assets? To every prayer and good work performed by man there is a satisfactory value; that is, the prayer or good work has a definite worth in the sight of God to "satisfy" for, to repay for, to make up for, the sinfulness of our other deeds. In God's goodness, if I myself do not need this "satisfactory" part, it is not just "written off" but it is put into the Church's treasury, thence to be drawn for the sake of other of my brethren who do need such "satisfaction."

This transfer to the Church's treasury and subsequent issuance therefrom to needy souls is part of the Communion of Saints.

In the Church there is hereby, through God's mercy, a splendid spiritual communism: the unusable wealth of the spiritually rich is at the disposal of the spiritually poor. The satisfactory assets are real, tangible, spiritual wealth, and are held "in trust" by the Church to be dealt out according to the discretionary power God has granted her and in proportion to the spiritual standing of the one to whom she grants the power of withdrawal.

But, before sketching the method of withdrawal, how is the treasury filled, and how are its assets so kept that there is never any remotest chance of bankruptcy?

During His life on earth, Our Lord's every prayer and every act had an enormous satisfactory value because it was the act and the prayer of the God-Man. Now Our Lord was sinless and needed to make no jot or tittle of "satisfaction," since the slightest sin was impossible to Him. Hence, through God's kind dispensation of the Communion of Saints, all the unused satisfactory values of Our Lord's prayers and works were placed in the treasury of the Church. This alone would insure it against possible bankruptcy.

But Our Blessed Mother, too, needed to make no least "satisfaction" for sin, since she never committed any sin,

not even the slightest. Yet think of the wealth of "satisfaction" that the Queen of Sorrows amassed from her earliest childhood, through Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth, and as she stood beneath the Cross! Thus it is that our wealthy Mother has left a heritage to her children that they may be freed of a poverty she never knew. And so her wealth of "satisfaction" were added to her Son's in the already bulging treasury of the Church.

And then the saints, too, have made their contributions. Many of them led lives of innocence, yet wore their bodies down with penitential practices. Others had known the ways of sin, but once they set their hearts on God, loved Him fiercely and consumingly. Soon all their own debts were paid, but still they piled up "satisfactions" which they themselves could not use. So, in their case, too, the Communion of Saints brought about the addition of their wealth to the treasury of the Church.

The "satisfactions" of Our Lord, plus those of Our Blessed Mother, plus those of the saints, place limitless wealth at the disposal of the Church, and it is our privilege to draw on this wealth for ourselves and for the Souls in Purgatory.

These are the assets. How about the withdrawal?

First of all, it is for the Church to decide just how much of her treasure will be placed at the disposal of her needy children. She is plentifully generous, but it is hers alone to decide. And so, for this prayer or this good work she grants a plenary indulgence; to another prayer or another good work a partial indulgence of greater or less amount.

On the other hand, another controlling condition comes from the side of the one who wants to acquire some of this wealth, usually termed "gaining an indulgence." According to my dispositions of love of God and of sorrow for sin, and of resolution to avoid sin, just in that proportion am I entitled to draw on the treasury. If my love of God is tepid, if my sorrow for sin is genuine but not very gripping, if my resolve is hearty but not inclusive of even the slightest sin—then my draft on the Church's treasury will be honored just that far, and no farther.

Briefly, I must be worthy of her beneficence, for she holds this wealth "in trust," to be dispensed only according to God's terms. And God's terms are that only His dutiful

children may share therein for themselves, and for those loved ones of His who are held away from Him, amid the purging fires of Purgatory, because of temporal punishment due to sin.

Temporal punishment due to sin! That is the root of so much Catholic doctrine. Because there is a temporal punishment due to sin—which may readily remain even when the sin has been forgiven—I must make amends for these sins, or technically “satisfy” for them, by penitential works. These works may be my own, or, through God’s generosity, He will receive in payment for the debt I owe Him, some of the satisfactory values in the treasury of the Church.

But if I die with temporal punishment still due, then it is in Purgatory that I must suffer until my debt is cleared away. I am insolvent—nor have I personally any longer the privilege of drawing on the treasury of the Church. But my friends can draw on it for me. They can perform the good works or say the prayers assigned by the Church and hand over to God the indulgence they might have gained for themselves.

Because it denies that there is any temporal punishment due to forgiven sin, traditional Protestant theology logically repudiates penitential practices, indulgences, and Purgatory.

But to us Catholics there is deep consolidation both in our own poverty and in our attitude towards our dead. My spiritual poverty can be enriched from the riches of my wealthier brethren. For my dead: if they are in Heaven, I know they are praying for me, if they are in Purgatory I can help them, with a pittance of my own, and with the largesses that I may gain for them from the treasury of the Church. That is why our dead are always so close to us; it is a nearness that springs from the Communion of Saints.

The Church Prays at Our Dying

REVEREND FRANCIS P. LeBUFFE, S.J.

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WHEN November comes we think much of death: of the death of those who have gone before; of our own death which is hourly drawing on apace.

To each of us, death is a solemn fact—and it should be. To some it is a terrifying fact—as it should not be. For death is going home. The days of our sojourning away from the visible presence of our Father are then over, and His summons to leave this world of pilgrimaging is His loving message that He wants us home with Him—and that, too, for eternity. Sin alone can make this summons dreadful; for, indeed, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” But if I really love Him, and really try to serve Him—even though I do not serve Him as best I may—I know His love, and His call is sweet—to come back home.

All this is in keeping with the Liturgy of the Church, and so we turn to her, our Mother, as she talks to her children at their dying.

It is a distinct loss to our spiritual lives that so few of us know the “Prayers for the Dying.” If we have ever heard them, it was only at the bedside of our loved ones when the cry of our hearts quite drowned out the words of the priest. Yet the intensely consoling beauty of the prayers make them preëminent amid all the wealth of the Church’s exquisite Liturgy.

With all a mother’s tenderness, she first calls on all the saints to pray for her child who is soon to leave her. Our Lord is begged to “deliver him” from all harm, and to win this grace He is reminded of mystery after mystery of His mortal life. Then follows the full, deep pathos of her parting prayers as she bids her child go back to God:

Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who was poured out upon thee; in the name of the glorious and holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary; in the name of

the Angels, Archangels; in the name of Thrones, Dominations; in the name of Powers and Principalities; in the name of Cherubim and Seraphim; in the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets; in the name of the holy Apostles and Evangelists; in the name of the holy Martyrs and Confessors; in the name of the holy Monks and Hermits; in the name of the holy Virgins and of all the saints of God; let thy place be in peace this day, and let thy abode be in holy Sion: Through the same Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Merciful God! Gracious God! who, according to the multitude of Thy mercies, blottest out the sins of the penitent and through the pardon of forgiveness remittest the guilt of past offences, mercifully regard this Thy servant and as he implores Thee, hearken to his cry for the forgiveness of all his sins which he confesses freely from his heart. Renew, O most loving Father! whatsoever hath been corrupted in him through the frailty of human nature, or outraged through the deceits of the devil; and join him to the unity of the body of the Church as a member that has been redeemed. Pity, Lord, his sighs! Pity his tears and since he has no hope but in Thy mercy, admit him to the sacrament of reconciliation.

No least word of terror, no conjuring up of horrible image; but a mother's final message as she speeds another one of her children back to Father's home. And then, as she looks beyond and catches once more the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem, she draws a picture that from sheer poignancy grips our very being:

As, therefore, thy soul goes forth from thy body—

May the glittering band of the Angels meet thee;

May the council of the Apostles who are to judge thee, receive thee;

May the triumphant army of white-robed martyrs come out to welcome thee;

May the white-robed host of radiant confessors encircle thee;

May the choir of exulting Virgins receive thee;

May the embrace of a blessed repose in the bosom of the Patriarchs enfold thee.

A glorious troop, indeed, but there is one there to whom she may well confide her child, one whose love has been taught him from his earliest years.

May the holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, turn her eyes graciously upon thee.

Our earthly mother calls to our Heavenly Mother, a mother to a mother speaking. And then beyond the glorious army of the saved, beyond even our own Blessed Mother, holy Mother Church sees her Spouse, the Man-

God—and in her love for Him and for this His child and hers, she cries out:

May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a gentle and happy (*festivus*) countenance and give thee a place among those who are to stand before Him forever.

Thus she prays, calling and calling again on God's mercy and on His love. She begs Our Lord to place her child "amid the ever-smiling greens of Paradise." She asks the Good Shepherd to "recognize His sheep," and prays that "standing by ever in person, he may gaze upon unveiled Truth with joy-filled eyes." As God saved Henoch and Elias, Noah and Abraham, Job and Lot, Moses and Daniel, Sussanna and David, and Peter and Paul, and Thecla, so, naming them each in turn, she prays: "deliver, O Lord, the soul of Thy servant." Ever is it of hope she speaks and of deliverance; always of joy after this vale of sorrows; always of rest after life's fitful fever.

Space forbids lengthier quoting, but an ending may fittingly be made with the final prayer of the Church, her last words into the ear of her dying child:

May the most kind Virgin, Mother of God, Mary, most dutiful comforter of those on whom grief lies, confide the soul of this servant to her Son that, through a mother's intercession, he may not fear the terrors of death, but, with her as his companion, may he joyfully enter the longed-for home of his Heavenly fatherland.

Thus as death comes nearest, into our Mother Mary's hand (*ea comite*) she places the hand of her dying child, for a mother can best trust a mother. And there the parting comes—with our Mother Mary holding my hand just at the threshold of *home*.